

Little Ghost Footprints: A Halloween Sensory Craft

Materials Needed

- Black or dark purple construction paper (1-2 sheets)
- Taste-safe, non-toxic white paint (You can make your own with 2 tablespoons cornstarch + 1 tablespoon cold water mixed, then add 1/2 cup boiling water and stir until it thickens. Let cool completely. A splash of white food coloring is optional.)
- A shallow dish or paper plate for the paint
- A paintbrush or sponge brush
- Baby wipes or a damp cloth for easy cleanup
- A black marker (for the grown-up to use later)
- A smock or old clothes for Oliver
- A high chair or a protected floor area (a splat mat or old towel)

Learning Objectives

By the end of this lesson, Oliver will have opportunities to:

- **Develop Fine Motor Skills:** by attempting to grasp the paintbrush or touching the paint with fingers.
- **Engage in Sensory Exploration:** by feeling the texture and temperature of the paint on his skin (foot and hands).
- **Practice Cause and Effect:** by understanding that pressing his painted foot onto paper leaves a mark.
- **Develop Language:** by hearing and associating new words like "ghost," "white," "cold," and "sticky."

Lesson Procedure

1. Part 1: Preparation & Sensory Introduction (5 minutes)

Your goal here is to create a safe, fun space and introduce the materials without pressure.

- Prepare your area. Place the construction paper on the splat mat or high chair tray. Pour a small amount of the cooled, taste-safe white paint onto the paper plate.
- Sit with Oliver and show him the materials. Use simple, happy language: "Look, Oliver! We have paint today. This is white paint."
- Allow him to touch the (unpainted) brush and the paper. Let him feel the textures.
- Dip a finger into the paint and make a dot on the paper, showing him how it works. Let him touch the paint with his fingers if he is interested. Describe the feeling: "Ooh, the paint is cool and squishy!"

2. Part 2: The Ghost Footprint (5 minutes)

This is the main event! Keep it light and fun. The process is more important than the perfect product.

- Gently remove one of Oliver's socks and shoes.
- Using the paintbrush or sponge, apply a thin, even layer of the white paint to the bottom of his foot. You can make this a playful moment by singing a song or making funny sounds. Say, "We're painting your tiny foot!"
- Carefully guide his painted foot onto the center of the black construction paper. Press down gently but firmly on his heel, the ball of his foot, and his toes to ensure a full print.
- Lift his foot straight up to reveal the footprint. React with excitement! "Wow! Look what you made, Oliver! A footprint!"
- Immediately wipe his foot clean with a baby wipe or damp cloth.
- If he's enjoying it, you can make a second or third ghost on the same page or a new one.

3. Part 3: Finishing Touches & Clean-Up (5 minutes)

This part transitions from the activity to real-world application and tidying up.

- Set the paper aside in a safe place to dry completely.
- Engage Oliver in the clean-up process. Let him help wipe the mat with a cloth or splash his hands in a small basin of water (with supervision). This teaches responsibility and is also a fun sensory experience.
- Once the paint is completely dry, you (the adult) can take the black marker and draw two simple dots for eyes and a little circle for a mouth on the "heel" part of the footprint, turning it into a cute ghost.
- Show Oliver the finished craft. Point to it and say, "Look, Oliver! You made a little ghost. Boo!"

Differentiation & Inclusivity

- **For a Hesitant Child:** If Oliver is unsure about having his foot painted, don't force it. Start by letting him paint with his fingers instead. You can also try making a "ghost handprint" as an alternative. Model the fun by putting a little paint on your own hand first.
- **For an Eager Child (Extension):** If he loves the feeling of paint, allow for more exploration. Let him use his hands to spread paint on a separate piece of paper after the footprint is done. You can also introduce another Halloween color, like taste-safe orange paint (made with carrot or sweet potato puree mixed with cornstarch).
- **Adapting to Mood:** If Oliver is not in the mood, keep the session very short (one footprint and done) or simply postpone it. The goal is a positive creative experience.

Assessment (Observational)

Observe and mentally note Oliver's engagement and developmental progress during the activity. Ask yourself:

- Did he show curiosity towards the materials?
- Did he willingly participate in touching the paint (with hands or feet)?
- Did he seem to understand that his action (foot pressing down) created the mark on the paper?
- Did he react to the sensory input (e.g., laugh, wiggle his toes, look intently)?
- Did he respond to the new vocabulary words used during the craft?

The finished artwork serves as a wonderful memento of his developmental stage and creative exploration.